

# Dragonshards

## The Children of Khyber

By Keith Baker



---

*"Your sigil creates, child of Cannith. Mine holds the power to destroy."*

-- Rotting Bal, Tarkanan Enforcer

The aberrant lords of the War of the Mark wielded terrible powers. Madness, flame, and plague were the least of their weapons. These tales inspired the superstitions that haunt the bearers of aberrant dragonmarks to this day. But in the centuries since the War of the Mark, no aberrant mark has ever bestowed the sort of powers seen in the past.



Until now.

Over the last few years, aberrant marks have been appearing with greater frequency. And for the first time in over a thousand years, some who carry these marks have seen the twisted sigil grow in size and power . . . mirroring the Lesser and Greater Dragonmarks of the pure houses. These are the children of Khyber: the aberrant lords of the age to come.

The child of Khyber is a prestige class designed for characters that bear aberrant marks. It draws on material presented in the [Dragonmarked](#) sourcebook, notably the Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark and Greater Aberrant Dragonmark feats. While you will thus need *Dragonmarked* to pursue this prestige class, the background information presented here should prove useful to any character that possesses an aberrant dragonmark.

### Becoming a Child of Khyber

Like the pure dragonmarks, aberrant dragonmarks are a mystery. One cannot simply choose to be a child of Khyber. It may be random chance, or the Dragon Below may be picking its champions in a war that is to come. However it works, the power seems to choose its vessel, not the other way around. Most children of Khyber do share a few common traits aside from their dragonmarks: They are uniformly gifted people -- a cut above the

common masses. And most possess a dark outlook on life; while they may not be evil, many are cynical, ruthless, brooding, selfish, or even insane. This could reflect the influence of the aberrant dragonmark, or merely the fact that those who bear aberrant marks often lead difficult lives: Whatever the reason, truly noble souls cannot become children of Khyber.

If your character meets the prerequisites, you can choose to make him a child of Khyber. But this is not the result of a conscious choice on his part; it does not reflect training or dedication. One day, his aberrant dragonmark grows larger, and he feels the dark power of Khyber in his blood.

### Child of Khyber Entry Requirements

**Alignment:** Any nongood

**Skills:** 7 ranks in any two skills

**Feat:** Aberrant Dragonmark

At present, most children of Khyber are loners. However, the criminal House Tarkanan is extremely interested in recruiting the children of Khyber. Many of the Cults of the Dragon Below believe those who bear aberrant dragonmarks are blessed by Khyber, and aberrant heirs can wield great influence among such cults. The children of Khyber are few in number and spread across Khorvaire, but as more time passes, more and more will place their powers in the service of a greater cause.

**Table 1: The Child of Khyber Hit Die: d8**

Class Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+0	+2	+2	+2	Aberrant affinity, Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+3	Additional action points, improved aberrant dragonmark
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+3	Improved lesser aberrant dragonmark
4th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Greater Aberrant Dragonmark
5th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Aberrant burst

**Class Skills (4 + Int modifier per level):** Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Disable Device, Disguise, Forgery, Gather Information, Hide, Intimidate, Knowledge (local), Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Search, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Spot, Survival, Tumble.

### Class Features

As a child of Khyber, your greatest strength is the power of your aberrant dragonmark. As you advance in the class, you unlock the hidden powers of your mark, while learning skills that can help you survive in an unfriendly world.

**Aberrant Affinity (Ex):** As you master the powers of you aberrant mark, you gain a measure of influence over others touched by Khyber's power. You may add your class level to all Charisma-related checks dealing with aberrations or people who possess aberrant dragonmarks.

**Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark:** At 1st level you gain Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark as a bonus feat. You do not have to meet the skill prerequisites for the feat.

**Additional Action Points (Ex):** At 2nd level and beyond, your action point maximum per level is increased by 2.

**Improved Aberrant Dragonmark (Ex):** Beginning at 2nd level, you may use the spell-like ability granted by your aberrant dragonmark one additional time per day.

**Improved Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark (Ex):** Beginning at 2nd level, you may use the spell-like ability granted by your lesser aberrant dragonmark one additional time per day.

**Greater Aberrant Dragonmark:** At 4th level you gain Greater Aberrant Dragonmark as a bonus feat. You do not have to meet the skill prerequisites for the feat.

**Aberrant Burst (Ex):** At 5th level you gain the ability to call on inner reserves of strength to fuel your aberrant dragonmark, but this leaves you drained and ill. Once per day when you use one of your aberrant dragonmark powers, you can declare it to be an aberrant burst. The caster level and saving throw DC of the effect are both increased by 3; however, you are sickened for 1d4 rounds after using the ability.

## Playing a Child of Khyber

You can feel your power festering within you. It's different for every child of Khyber. One feels a chill no warmth can push away, while another complains of fire burning beneath his skin. An heir with the power of *confusion* feels the force of madness in his mind, trying to claw its way out and feast on the thoughts of others. Your mark may bring you pain. It may whisper to you as you try to sleep. But it is a part of you. To others it may sound like a curse; but without that knot of dark energy within, you don't know who you'd be.

Odds are you've had a difficult life. Most aberrant heirs do. Even before your mark appeared, you felt a distance from those around you. And how did your mark first manifest? Did you char a childhood friend with an accidental burst of flame, or *charm* the object of your unrequited affections? Whatever happened, once the mark appeared, you were likely the subject of fear and suspicion. Perhaps you were driven from your home, or perhaps you chose to travel, hiding your mark and finding comfort in the company of strangers. Only one friend has remained with you through all your journeys -- that twisted mark that burns on your skin, the power waiting to be unleashed.

And now your mark is growing. Not just the sigil on the skin, or the power you can channel through it. You can feel a darkness flowing through you, growing with each passing day. You know that there is no place for you in the light: You can feel it in your soul. But only you can decide if you will embrace this shadow that lies within and accept your destiny as one of the children of Khyber . . . or whether you resist the call of darkness, and follow the hero's path.

## Combat

The children of Khyber can follow many different paths, and there is no single style of combat that applies to them all. If you are a barbarian with the power of *fire shield*, you'll want to call on your flames and charge into the fray . . . while if you're a rogue with the abilities of *charm person* and *suggestion*, you'll want to hang back and let others do the fighting. Look for synergy between your aberrant powers and the skills of your base class, and use these to determine your optimum strategies.

## Advancement

You didn't choose your powers. You never asked to manifest an aberrant dragonmark, and you certainly didn't expect it to expand further, spreading out across your skin like a cancer. You've heard of aberrant dragonmarks, but it has been over a thousand years since the world has seen one of such size and power. Only you know

what it means to you. When your mark grew, did you revel in your newfound might? Or were you terrified, worried about what might happen next?

A child of Khyber has no set path of advancement. As with combat tactics, everything depends on your original class background and on the powers of your mark. Your skills are oriented around survival: Those who discover your true nature will fear your power, and keen senses and the ability to move unseen in city or the wilds may be your only hope in the days to come. Feats such as Hideous Strength and Death Curse can further enhance the powers of your dragonmark, but if your background is that of a rogue or fighter, you may be better off choosing feats that build on those skills.

## Resources

You may never have seen another child of Khyber; your aberrant kin are few in number and spread across the world. As a result, you have no special resources to draw upon. Children of Khyber often feel an instinctive bond with one another, a reflection of your aberrant affinity class ability . . . but this doesn't mean that another aberrant will risk her life for you.

If your aberrant mark earns you a place in House Tarkanan or in a cult of the Dragon Below, you may gain access to additional resources. See *Sharn: City of Towers* for more information on the benefits of associating with House Tarkanan.

## Children of Khyber in the World

*"My ancestors put your kind to the sword, warped one. Let me show you what happens when you challenge your betters."*

-- Jaxon d'Cannith, Cannith Sorcerer

Less than four years have passed since the first child of Khyber felt his aberrant dragonmark growing and spreading across his skin. Whether it is the will of the Dragon Below or some sinister after-effect of the Mourning, the spread of aberrant power is a recent development. Most children of Khyber choose to conceal their powers and keep to the shadows. But one organization is actively searching for those who bear aberrant dragonmarks: House Tarkanan.

## Daily Life

Any bloodline can be touched by the aberrant taint. None can predict where or when an aberrant mark will manifest . . . and as such, none can predict the lifestyle of the aberrant heir. Some become wanderers; others turn to lives of crime. A few conceal their marks and continue their normal lives, ignoring the whispering voice of Khyber at the edge of their thoughts and dreams.

House Tarkanan is a criminal guild with growing influence in many of the great cities of Khorvaire. Children of Khyber who join House Tarkanan are trained in the use of their aberrant marks and also encouraged to develop skills that can serve the guild directly. An heir with powers of *charm person* or *suggestion* usually becomes a con artist or extortionist, while one with a *poison* touch may be trained as an assassin. The lords of House Tarkanan believe that a second War of the Mark is inevitable, and this filters through the daily life of house members: Tarkanans learn to see their comrades as fellow soldiers in an army and to consider all non-aberrants as potential enemies.

## Organization

As a whole, the children of Khyber have no organization. They are spread across Khorvaire, and most hide from the light. However, House Tarkanan provides a haven and a power base for those aberrants it locates. House Tarkanan is organized as a mocking reflection of a dragonmarked house. At the bottom it is a criminal guild, focusing on the businesses of theft and murder. Above this, the "barons" manage regional affairs and coordinate the continuing effort to locate and train additional aberrant heirs. Profits from the activities of the house are reinvested in additional safehouses and supplies, as the leaders prepare for their eventual war.

The current matriarch of House Tarkanan is Thora Tavin (LE female human rogue 6/assassin 6/child of Khyber 2). Thora holds court in Sharn, but she has a supernatural gift for sensing the presence of others with aberrant marks (a variation of the Shield of Siberys feat presented in *Dragonmarked*) and she spends much of her time traveling Khorvaire in search of new recruits.

## **NPC Reactions**

While the power of superstition has faded with time, many people are still suspicious of those who bear aberrant marks. This is especially strong in smaller communities. In a vast metropolis like Sharn, where people deal with harpies, warforged, gargoyles, and ogres, an aberrant mark doesn't seem so frightening; but in a small Thranish farming village, people still consider the aberrant mark to be the touch of darkness. So there is no hard rule, but a child of Khyber may receive an unfriendly reaction from those who discover his true nature . . . or at least a grudging and suspicious indifference.

Some aberrants are coming to the conclusion that they should stand together in the face of fear and possible persecution, and a child of Khyber has a greater ability to influence those who bear aberrant marks. However, this is not enough to ensure a friendly reaction from all aberrants; many remain suspicious and indifferent to all strangers, even others bearing aberrant dragonmarks.

## **Children of Khyber in Your Game**

The children of Khyber are few in number and secretive by nature, and they should not have a major impact on the daily lives of adventurers. However, House Tarkanan could come to be an important ally for characters that possess aberrant marks . . . or a dangerous enemy of a party working in the service of the dragonmarked houses. An individual child of Khyber could be a vicious killer, driven mad by his power; a cool and calculating assassin, seeking vengeance against the dragonmarked houses for the wrongs done to his ancestors; or a renegade unjustly persecuted for the mark she bears on her skin, simply trying to survive in a hostile world. And is the resurgence of aberrant power a harbinger of a great evil on the rise? Might the dragonmark houses renew their persecution of the aberrant heirs? The answers to these questions are in your hands. You could choose to simply use House Tarkanan as a colorful criminal guild, distinguished by the powers of its members; or you could make it the center of a campaign revolving around a renewed war between the aberrants and their pure-mark cousins.

## **Adaptation**

If you wish to provide children of Khyber with even greater versatility, the improved aberrant dragonmark and improved lesser aberrant dragonmark class abilities could give a character the choice of an additional use of an existing ability or allow him to choose an additional ability from the appropriate list, meaning that a 4th-level child of Khyber could have two aberrant mark abilities, two lesser aberrant mark abilities, and one greater aberrant mark ability. Because aberrant dragonmark abilities are not thematically linked in the same way as the pure marks, this can provide a child of Khyber with considerable versatility, so think carefully before incorporating this optional rule.

## **Sample Child of Khyber**

Rotting Bal derives his name from the sores that cover his skin, an apparent side effect of his powerful aberrant dragonmark. Bal was born in the Shadow Marches, in a hidden monastery dedicated to the Dragon Below; he learned martial arts at the feet of a dolgaunt master. But he always felt a certain distance from the other monks. The promises of Xoriat felt empty: Bal was driven by different visions. When Thora Tavin came to his monastery, he knew she held the key to his destiny. Bal is utterly devoted to Thora and would give his life to protect her. With his lethal touch, he is one of the deadliest people in Sharn, and he serves House Tarkanan as assassin and enforcer. While he is fanatically devoted to the Tarkanan cause and has no compunctions about killing, he is no fool; he can be reasoned with and would rather avoid unnecessary conflict if possible.

The Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark and Greater Aberrant Dragonmark feats can be found in *Dragonmarked*. Death Curse and Hideous Strength will be presented in an upcoming Dragonshard, but you can replace them with other feats for now.

### Rotting Bal CR 10

Male human monk 6/child of Khyber 4

LEMedium humanoid

**Init** +3; **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +11

**Languages** Common, Undercommon

---

**AC** 18, touch 17, **flat-footed** 15

(+3 Dex, +1 deflection, +1 natural, +2 Wisdom, +1 monk)

**hp** 54 (10 HD)

**Immune** normal disease

**Resist** evasion

**Fort** +11, **Ref** +13, **Will** +12; +2 against enchantment

**Action Points** 2

---

**Speed** 60 ft. (12 squares)

**Melee** unarmed strike +10/+5 (1d8+3) or

touch attack +10 (*vampiric touch*, *slay living*, or trip) or

unarmed strike +9/+9/+4 (1d8+3) with flurry of blows

**Base Atk** +7; **Grp** +14

**Atk Options** Combat Expertise, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip, Power Attack, *ki* strike (magic), slow fall (30 ft.)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th):

2/day -- *shield* (CL 5th), *vampiric touch* (4d6; CL 8th)

1/day -- *slay living* (DC 15; CL 10th)

**Combat Gear** two *potions of mage armor*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of bull's strength*, potion bracer

---

**Abilities** Str 16\*, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 10

**SQ** aberrant affinity (+4)

**Feats** Aberrant Dragonmark, Combat Expertise, Death Curse\*, Deflect Arrows[B], Greater Aberrant Dragonmark [B], Hideous Strength\*, Improved Grapple[B], Improved Trip[B], Lesser Aberrant Dragonmark[B], Power Attack

**Skills** Balance +9, Climb +6, Heal +4, Hide +14, Jump +26, Knowledge(local) +3, Listen +8, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +7, Search +7, Sense Motive +6, Spot +11, Tumble +13

**Possessions** *gauntlets of ogre power*, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *boots of striding and springing*, *darkweave cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +1

---

**Hook** "Shall we compare our gifts, child of the Dragon Above?"

**Keith Baker** has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the Wizards of the Coast Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the ***Eberron Campaign Setting*** and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

---

©1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Based on the original **Dungeons & Dragons®** game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the **Dungeons & Dragons** game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison. **D&D**, **Dungeons & Dragons**, and **Forgotten Realms** are registered trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All Wizards characters, character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This material is protected under the laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction of or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, places, or events is purely coincidental. This Wizards of the Coast game product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 System License, please visit **[www.wizards.com/d20](http://www.wizards.com/d20)**. ©2001-2006 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved. Made in the U.S.A.

**Visit our website at [www.wizards.com/dnd](http://www.wizards.com/dnd)**